



## DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

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# Program Statement

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OPI: DIR  
Number: 1220.1B  
Date: May 6, 2002  
Subject: Customer Service

1. **PURPOSE AND SCOPE.** The purpose of this directive is to ensure that D.C. Department of Corrections (DCDC) employees provide courteous and professional customer service. This directive shall apply to all employees and agents conducting business on behalf of the DCDC.
2. **PROGRAM OBJECTIVES.** The reputation and image of the DCDC and the customer's experience is shaped by the quality of service given and the messages conveyed through each contact. The expected results of this program are:
  - a. Established standards for answering and responding to customer telephone calls shall be met.
  - b. Established standards for responding to all Mayoral correspondence shall be met.
  - c. Prompt, accurate and courteous service will be rendered to all customers and constituents who conduct business with the DCDC.
  - d. Quality assurance measures shall be followed to ensure that the DCDC telephone-based customer service program is efficient, effective and customer friendly.
3. **DIRECTIVES AFFECTED**
  - a. **Directives Rescinded**
    - 1) PS 1220.1A Customer Service (4/20/01)
  - b. **Directives Referenced**
    - 1) DC Law 1-96, Freedom of Information Act of 1976

- 2) DO 1280.2B      Reporting and Notification Procedures for Significant Incidents and Extraordinary
- 3) DO 1290. 1A      The Lorton Public Information Alert Phone System (5/4/93)
- 4) DO 1300.1A      Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) (4/5/78)
- 5) DO 1300.2      Consent to Release Information (8/9/76)
- 6) DO 1320.1A      Inquiries & Request from Government Officials & Agencies (8/31/90)
- 7) DO 1340.2A      Relationship with the Media (9/15/00)
- 8) Customer Service Operations, Best Practices Guide (4/9/02)

#### **4. AUTHORITY**

- a. District of Columbia Government Telecommunications Standards and Management Policy (9/23/99).
- b. Mayor's Memorandum 99-13, Minimum Standards for Telephone-based Customer Service (12/21/99).

#### **5. ACA STANDARDS REFERENCED**

- a. American Correctional Association 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition Standards for Administration of Correctional Agencies: 2-CO-1A-06, 2-CO-1A-09, 2-CO-1A-18, 2-CO-1A-20, 2-CO-1A-22, 2-CO-1A-26, 2-CO-1A-27, 2-CO-1B-09, 1CO-1D-02, 2-CO-1E-01, 2-CO-1E-01, 2-CO-1E-08.
- b. American Correctional Association 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition Standards for Adult Local Detention Facilities: 3-ALDF-1A-17, 3-ALDF-1D-02, 3-ALDF-1D-06.
- c. American Correctional Association 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition Standards for Adult Residential Community Residential Services: 3-ACRS-1A-04, 3-ACRS-1A-16, 3-ACRS-1A-17, 3-ACRS-1A-18, 3-ACRS-1A-19, 3-ACRS-1A-20, 3-ACRS-1B-03, 3-ACRS-1B-09, 3-ACRS-1B-11, 3-ACRS-1B-13, 3-ACRS-1D-02, 3-ACRS-1E-01, 3-ACRS-1E-06, 3-ACRS-1E-08.

#### **6. DEFINITIONS -** For the purpose of this Program Statement, the following definitions shall apply:

- a. **Telephone Services** - From a customer service perspective, telephone services are operationally defined in the following four categories:

- 1) **Main Numbers** –Published entry points into the agency where calls are routed throughout the organization (e.g., Director's Office Main Desk).
  - 2) **Large Service Numbers** – Published entry points into an operational unit that provides a service (e.g., the institutional Control Center).
  - 3) **Small Service Numbers** – Published numbers that go directly to an operational unit that provides a service (e.g., the main numbers to the Offices of the Deputy Directors, the Administrators and the Office Chiefs
  - 4) **Desk Numbers** – Direct dial telephone numbers to the desk of an employee.
- b. **Correspondence** – Any written material transmitted to the Mayor and forwarded to an agency for action or information. This includes letters, memoranda, e-mails and faxes from constituents, the District Council, other District and Federal agencies, etc.
- c. **Customers**
- 1) **External Customers** are people outside of the DCDC who depend upon employees to deliver services. They include but are not limited to District of Columbia citizens and constituents, other government agencies, vendors, agents acting on behalf of the government and persons acting in the interest of incarcerated persons.
  - 2) **Internal Customers** are people inside of the DCDC to include co-workers within and external to the employee's unit as well as managers and supervisors.
- d. **Technology Officer** – DCDC employee designated as the agency's liaison to the District of Columbia Government Office of the Chief Technology Officer, responsible for oversight and monitoring for the agency's telecommunications program. .
- e. **Correspondence Tracking System** – The DCDC Point of Contact shall use the Point-of-Contact Network (POCNET) database to process the Mayor's correspondence. This web-interface database allows the agency to assign its own response dates to complete requests, measures constituent contact and response date compliance and allows the Mayor's Office to track constituent inquiries.

## 7. EMPLOYEE AND SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITIES

- a. **Technology Officer.** The Technology Officer is responsible for oversight of the telecommunications program to include:

- 1) Ensuring that equipment needs are assessed and provided.
  - 2) Providing telecommunications technical assistance to program managers.
  - 3) Maintaining a quality assurance program for courteous public service, effective equipment use, billing accuracy, and identifying service misuse or abuse.
- b. **Point of Contact.** The Point of Contact shall be responsible for the following:
- 1) Managing and tracking the correspondence database, POCNET, to ensure all correspondence forwarded from the Mayor's Office to the agency is responded to in accordance with guidelines set forth.
  - 2) Managing and monitoring through program compliance reviews that the agency customer service program satisfies District Government customer service initiatives and complies with this directive.
  - 3) Responding to suggestions, concerns and complaints received from customers, District Government and agency customer service auditors.
  - 4) Developing and maintaining a customer service enhancement program.
  - 5) Maintaining a current agency directory listing.
- c. **Supervisors**
- 1) All supervisors and managers shall exercise the highest level of professional courtesy towards all customers who contact their unit and shall ensure that all subordinates comply with this directive.
  - 2) All supervisors and managers shall ensure that staff have a basic understanding of the primary functions of the DCDC and a basic knowledge of District services such as:
    - ??311 Non-Emergency and 911 Emergency
    - ?? 727-1000 D.C. Call Center
    - ??(202) INFO 211, DHS "Answers Please"
    - ??The District of Columbia website address ([www.dc.gov](http://www.dc.gov))
    - ?? All main agency numbers.

- 3) Supervisors and managers shall observe staff performance, solicit customer/caller feedback and investigate customer complaints of employee telephone assistance, service and/or conduct.
- 4) Supervisors and managers shall recognize employees who render outstanding customer service; i.e., sending "thank you" emails or letters to employees that have performed well, appreciation certificates, "thank you" fliers, acknowledgements in staff meetings, employee bulletin boards, etc.
- 5) Supervisors shall initiate appropriate disciplinary action against employees failing to meet customer service standards.

d. **Employees**

- 1) Each employee shall treat customers with enthusiasm, courtesy and respect and use language that is easily understandable.
- 2) Each employee shall promptly answer customers' questions with accurate, objective information, but shall do so only on matters within their purview and consistent with applicable laws, regulations and policy to include FOIA and rights of privacy.
- 3) Each employee shall resolve customers' needs with the fewest number of calls possible.
- 4) Each employee shall promptly respond to customers' suggestions, concerns and complaints.
- 5) Inquiries from the media and the general public about the agency, its employees or inmates shall be referred to the Chief of the Office of Communications.
- 6) Each employee is responsible for using government telecommunications technology correctly in order to complete work related tasks or for conducting business on behalf of the District of Columbia.
- 7) When recording desk voice mail messages, the employee shall eliminate unnecessary background noises, speak in a clear, distinctive voice and reflect the same professionalism that would be provided during a face-to-face business conversation with the customer.
- 8) Each employee shall respond within two (2) business days, to requests for services left by customers on automated answering devices, to either verify receipt of the call—or whenever possible—to immediately provide the appropriate assistance.
- 9) Voice mailboxes shall be checked no less than twice daily.

- 10) Voice mail greetings that are time sensitive shall be promptly updated.
- 11) Employees shall respond within forty-eight (48) hours to correspondence sent by customers to either verify receipt of the correspondence, or whenever possible, to immediately provide the response to their query.
- 12) Email shall be checked no less than twice daily to ensure prompt service delivery to correspondence that has been assigned via the Correspondence Tracking System.

## **8. SERVICE NUMBER REQUIREMENTS**

### **a. Main, Large and Small Service Numbers**

- 1) All main, large and small service numbers shall be staffed during business hours.
- 2) Calls in response to voice mail messages shall be returned by the close of business on the next business day.
- 3) A voice mail greeting for all main numbers shall be utilized as an "after hours" greeting.
- 4) At a minimum this greeting will convey the following information:
  - a) Thank the caller for contacting the DC Government.
  - b) Explain that their call is important to the DC Government.
  - c) Identify the name of the agency, the organizational unit and office.
  - d) Identify the service that is provided through this organizational unit or office.
  - e) Provide normal hours of business including days and hours of operation.
  - f) Provide the information items the caller is requested to leave for return calls during normal business hours, or when appropriate, ask the caller to call back during stated business hours.
  - g) A number to call for immediate assistance.

### **b. Desk Telephone Standard Greetings** shall include the following information in the greeting:

- 1) Name of Employee

- 2) Title of Employee
  - 3) Organizational Unit of Employee
  - 4) The employee's anticipated period of absence. An alternate person and telephone number to contact for immediate assistance.
  - 5) Inform the caller that their call will be returned within two (2) business days to either verify receipt of the service request and/or to provide a response or assistance to the caller's request.
- c. **Extended absence greetings** shall be provided when the employee is scheduled to be away from the office for two or more business days. The employee's greeting shall:
- 1) Identify the expected period of the absence
  - 2) Advise the caller what to do in case of urgency
  - 3) Advise the caller of when messages will be picked up
  - 4) Inform the caller if able to return calls during the period of absence.

## 9. PROCEDURES

- a. **Visitors.** Visitors shall be treated with dignity and respect. Employees shall conduct themselves as follows:
- 1) Employees shall maintain a professional image and demeanor at all times and shall not engage in boisterous conversation or discussion of DCDC operational issues while in the presence of visitors.
  - 2) Employees shall immediately acknowledge the visitor's presence and shall not keep visitors unduly waiting for service.
  - 3) When a language barrier exists, the employee shall make an attempt to find another employee who can communicate with the visitor. If the visitor speaks Spanish and is visiting an institution, the employee shall contact the Command Center for interpreter assistance.
  - 4) Employees shall smile, make eye contact when talking and listening, remain attentive and make the visitor feel welcome.
  - 5) Employees shall provide visitors with an appropriate place to wait, rest, talk or do business.

**b. Incoming Telephone Calls**

- 1) Telephones shall be answered within 3 rings.
- 2) Employees shall only accept local collect or long distance collect calls when authorized by written policy by the affected Deputy Director, Administrator or Office Chief.
- 3) Employees shall be courteous to customers and shall not:
  - a) Use speakerphones when talking with customers except when engaging in a conference call
  - b) Chew food or gum while talking with the customer
  - c) Hold secondary conversations with individuals other than the caller while the caller is on the phone
  - d) Become confrontational
- 4) Each employee shall state his/her name and the service area, e.g. "Good morning. This is John Doe in the Department of Corrections Directors Office. How may I assist you?" At the end of the conversation, thank the person for calling.
- 5) Callers shall be given the opportunity to identify themselves and briefly state their business prior to being placed on hold.
- 6) Employees shall ensure that callers are not kept waiting for extended periods. If the wait period is expected to be more than three minutes, the employee shall give the customer the options of continuing to hold, to call back, to leave a message, or to be referred to another employee who will provide the appropriate assistance.
- 7) The employee shall frequently check back with a caller who has been placed on hold.
- 8) Each employee shall attentively listen to the caller's request and may repeat the caller's message to ensure that the request is understood.
- 9) Customer assistance shall be provided at the first line of authority as is deemed appropriate. Each employee shall provide an appropriate resolution if it is within the employee's purview.
- 10) If the employee is not the appropriate individual to resolve the issue and is not reasonably certain of the appropriate unit or staff to resolve the



issue, the employee shall first attempt to locate and make contact with the proper party or service area prior to transferring the caller.

- 11) If it becomes apparent that identification of the appropriate staff will take more than a few minutes, the employee will give the caller the opportunity to continue to hold; to call back; or to leave his/her phone number so that the appropriate individual may return the phone call.
  - 12) Employees shall minimize the number of times a caller is transferred to resolve an issue by taking the message and delivering it to the appropriate staff person for resolution. The goal is one transfer per caller and that transfer will be to another person, not voicemail. Therefore the employee shall first contact the appropriate employee prior to transferring the caller. If the intended employee is not available the caller shall be given that party's name, telephone number and a recommended time to contact them.
  - 13) If the appropriate party is not available and the matter is of an urgent nature, give the caller the following options:
    - a) Allowing the employee to first attempt to locate and make contact with a higher authority who may provide immediate assistance;
    - b) Give the caller the phone number of the person who can immediately assist them; or
    - c) Be transferred to the voice mail of the party who can assist them in the requested party's absence.
  - 14) Each employee shall use empathy and exercise professional courtesy toward all callers.
- c. **Returning Telephone Calls.** Calls made to all numbers at every level of government shall be returned within two (2) business days of receipt.
- d. **Handling Complaints.** Customers shall be treated with respect and empathy and employees shall handle complaints using the following guidelines:
- 1) Don't take it personally.
  - 2) Remain calm and listen carefully to the complaint.
  - 3) Focus on the problem, not the person.
  - 4) Repeat the complaint and get acknowledgement that you heard it correctly.

- 5) Apologize that the problem has occurred.
- 6) Acknowledge the customer's feelings of anger, frustration, disappointment, etc.
- 7) Explain what action you will take to correct the problem and be sure to do so quickly.
- 8) Thank the customer for bringing the problem to your attention.
- 9) When all else fails, ask for help.

e. **Correspondence Procedures**

- 1) **Point of Contact.** The POC shall promptly act on correspondence when it is received to include:
  - a) Determining response priority and assigned a completion date,
  - b) Forwarding the correspondence to the appropriate agency manager for response,
  - c) Updating the POCNET database each time an action is taken to resolve the issue (to include: assignment, tracking and monitoring) and closing out the item when completed.
- 2) **Designated Responder**
  - a) The assigned responder shall open the email to receive further correspondence instructions and shall then click on the icon to proceed to the level (Attachment 1 – Sample email).
  - b) Step One – The responder shall click on “Step 1 Review Original Correspondence” (Attachment 2) at which time the original document shall be displayed (Attachment 3).
  - c) Step Two – The employee shall be instructed to contact the original sender ASAP and to document the contact. (Attachment 4). At this point the responder shall:
    - (1) Attempt to make contact with the customer via email, telephone or by mail.
    - (2) Advise the customer that the correspondence has been received.

- (3) If a response is not possible at that time, advise the customer of an anticipated date when he/she shall expect a response.
  - (4) The employee shall then press the "Able to make contact?" button located above the document on the computer screen, to confirm contact attempt, whether contact was made or to document why contact could not be made (Attachment 5).
  - (5) If the assigned employee feels that the correspondence was not appropriately routed, he or she may click on the "Request Assignment Change" icon at which time the employee shall note the change to be made in the assignment (Attachment 6).
- d) Step Three – The responder shall click on "Step 3. Draft a response and attach it" (Attachment 7). At this point, the responder shall be guided as follows:
- (1) Compose your response and save it as a file (Word, Excel, etc.). Be sure to remember the location of the file.
  - (2) Open the "Staff Response" section and press the "Attach Response" button.
  - (3) Locate the file to attach and click on "Create" (Attachment 8).
  - (4) Press the "Submit response" button above the document and forward the response to the original requestor unless instructed to wait for approval from the Director's Office (Attachment 9).
  - (5) If the correspondence requires attachments, the documents shall be scanned and an attachment created for the response.

## **10. TRAINING**

- a. The POC in conjunction with the Training Administrator shall develop and maintain the agency's Customer Service Training Program.
- b. Customer Service Training shall be incorporated into the Pre-service and In-service Training Programs for all staff with additional specialized training for clerical support staff.

## 11. DISSEMINATION

- a. This directive shall be distributed to all Department employees.
- b. This directive shall be included in post orders for positions that require regular telephone contact with the public.
- c. This directive shall be read at Roll Call for three consecutive days.
- d. This directive shall be discussed at staff meetings.
- e. This directive shall be included in all agency training curricula.



Odie Washington  
Director

## Attachment

- 1. Sample Email
- 2. Point of Contact Tracking System - Database Visual
- 3. Step One - Review Correspondence – Database Visual
- 4. Step Two – Contact Sender - Database Visual
- 5. Contact Dialog Box – Database Visual
- 6. Request Assignment Change - Database Visual
- 7. Step Three – Draft a Response - Database Visual
- 8. Create Attachment - Database Visual
- 9. Submit Response - Database Visual